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WLW
CINCINNATI

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

115
P.M. E.S.T.

A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE

No. 188

"COON RANGE FARMER

November 29, 1941

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

VOICE

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

Tools would wear out, men would die --

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: ABRUPT DISCORD

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER, fading behind....

ANNOUNCER

The land of Kentucky is a most various land. Stand high at the Ohio River. Look across over the shiny broad belt of water into the domed hills. Then on down into the swells of rolling bluegrass. Miles of gentle-nurtured country. Then across the winding Kentucky River, deep in the sharp woods. The hills quit again their gentle contour and soon rise, abrupt and irregular. Miles southward they begin once more to sink again, with curious valleys, and little ridges and ravines. Here in this undulating country of north Logan County is a set of hills called Coon Range, the scene of the 188th consecutive broadcast of Fortunes Washed Away.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER

Men change their minds sometimes, and it changes their lives. They don't move away, or leave off what they've once begun. But they just start thinking a new way about the same things. And that makes all the difference.

ORGAN: Sneak in "MY PRETTY MOHEE"

ANNOUNCER (continuing)

It is the spring of 1910 and Jim Hester is a young man of 20. He is tall and slim and strong. As he helps his father with the spring plowing you can tell by the look of him that he's been raised right -- a clear eye and straight thinking, you'd say...(FADE)....

SOUND: Mule chains, plow through sod, men grunting...

FATHER

Woah! Well, son, I think it's high time we stop wasting our strength on this blasted 20-acre piece.

JIM

But Pappy! It's the levelest piece on the farm!

FATHER

By shots, boy, that don't make no difference. There's only one way to farm this country and that's to clear it off and work it till it gets too po', and then clear 'nother piece.

JIM

Plenty of land around here, Pappy.

FATHER

Yup. But you got to clear off them oak trees fust. 'Course, it does 'pear that it wears out mighty fast once it's cleared off.

JIM

Pappy, I 'low we could fence this 20 acres and grow some peas next year. Corn don't yield no more'n 15 bushels to the acre.

FATHER

'Taint wuth it, son. No use cultivatin' it after this year. Come on now, I gotta git back to the store 'fore dinner time.

JIM

Pappy.....

FATHER

What's on your mind, son?

JIM

Pappy, sell me this here 20 acres.

FATHER

By shots, boy! I can't bobtail my farm thataway. 'Sides, you aint got money, and you don't need a piece of land yet.

JIM

I can buy it, Pappy. I'm gonna git four acres from Squire Deat.

FATHER

That old white sweet-gum land? Son, you're just plain crazy. I wouldn't pay taxes on it. Squire Deat wore that out 10 years ago.

JIM

Pappy, lissen. I'll trade you my new brown mare for this here piece.

FATHER

Look ahere, son. Look at me. What you drivin' at?

JIM

I'll be honest with you, pappy. I want to marry....I....

FATHER

By shots boy! Whyn't you say so? I'll fence that piece for you for a weddin' present.

ORGAN: "MY PRETTY MOHEE", fading for...

ANNOUNCER

Jim Hester brought his young wife Stella to the new little house, down the winding dirt road from his father's house. He didn't have a wagon, so he moved in the furniture on a ground slide. Three years passed -- three harvests of wheat and corn and hay. But the yields were small, and there was another responsibility now -- Jim and Stella had a young son. Jim and Stella were talking one evening after supper... (FADE)....

SOUND: Clatter of dishes, as....

STELLA (Hums "My Pretty MoHee")

JIM

Only thing wrong with your pretty voice, Stella, is that you don't use it enough.

STELLA

Get 'long with you, Jim Hester!

JIM

You ought to have gone on the stage 'stead of marryin' me and settlin' down way out here in Coon Range.

STELLA (laughing)

If you get me that organ like you promised maybe I'll study up a new song for you. (PAUSE) Jim, what's wrong? You've got that old long look on your face.

JIM

Guess it's this po' land of ours, honey. And me astudyin' how to git vittles out of it, and a organ for you too. All day I been thinkin' 'bout it....

STELIA

Aw hush, Jim. I aint studyin' about a new organ serious. Long as you're satisfied with my hummin' I don't give a continental 'bout a new organ. You know that, Jim.

JIM

I git a better yield than most of the neighbors, but still it aint worth shucks. Po' cows, skinny calves, runty hawgs. Mebbe something's wrong with this land. Mebbe the land 'round here aint no good... (FADE)

ORGAN: Begin montage...

ANNOUNCER

1913:

ORGAN: UP

ANNOUNCER

1918:

ORGAN: UP

ANNOUNCER

1923:

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER (cold)

Jim and Stella Hester kept trying, but it seemed to be a losing game. One day, riding home in the buggy from church... (FADE)....

SOUND: Horse trotting...

JIM

Woa there, Robbie, woa there girl!

STELLA

What you stoppin' here for Jim? I got to get that hen off the stove!

JIM

Jist wanted to look at that piece of land I traded for so's I could marry you. It aint no good, and I admit it now. Pappy had worn it out before I got it. You've stood by me these 13 years but the land aint.

STELLA

Oh, Jim, You keep worryin' all the time. It aint reasonable.

JIM

Now don't stop me, Stella. I'm tellin' you we ought to leave this place. Down in south Logan they got limestone soil. It's stronger. Don't wear out like this free stone dirt of ours. Let's pull out and find us a better farm to rent, even if we don't have our own home. It's better share croppin' good land than wearin' yourself out tryin' to own po' land.

STELLA

I know it's been hard, Jim. I've seen this acomin' for a long time.

(PAUSE) If you want to go, I'll go along with you, same as ever...

(FADE)....

SOUND: Horse walking slowly...

HILL (fading in)

Hi, there, Jim, what you lookin' so glum about?

JIM

Hello, Mister Hill. Guess it's 'cause I decided to leave my po' farm but can't find a good one to rent. Guess I'm a po' farmer...

HILL

Jim Hester, I've been county agent here in Logan County for a mighty long time and I know a good farmer when I see one. I'm lookin' at one right now.

JIM

If that's true, Mister Hill, I'm wastin' time on good for nothin' land. I've worked that farm of mine more'n 15 years, but now I'm through.

HILL

Jim, did you ever hear of the demonstration farm at Princeton?

JIM

'Course I've heard of it. Don't put much stock in that sort of thing, though.

HILL

You don't know what you're talkin' about, Jim! Come on, get off that mare and come with me. We're going to Princeton!

ORGAN: Brief bridge...

SOUND: Tractor behind...

HILL

....and over here, Jim, the station has been experimenting with a pasture fertilizer treatment.

JIM

Man alive! Look at that grass!

HILL

See that plot over yonder? Last year that 10 acres yielded forty bushels of corn to the acre.

JIM

You're not kiddin' Mister Hill?

HILL

It's a fact. And lime and phosphate did it. And Jim, it's the same type of soil as you've got at Coon Range.

JIM

Lime and phosphate...two words...two NEW words. Yesterday I was ready to leave that land of mine -- saw briars, sweet-gum, sassafras and all. And now I've changed my mind. By shots I'm gonna prove something here! If they can do it at Princeton I can do it too. I've made up my mind...(FADE)....

SOUND: General outdoor hubbub..men's voices...laughter..dishes rattling...

VOICE

Come over here, Jim Hester. What's that story we hear 'bout you gettin' a 40 bushel corn yield? Taint true, of course.

JIM

Boys, I'm havin' too much fun at this hog-killin' dinner to start an argument. But I'll tell you one thing. It IS true.

VOICE

Just kiddin' you, Jim. And I want to say for all of us -- we're proud of you. What you've done on your farm has sure showed us what we can do on ours. We've learned from you.

JIM

Yes, there has been a wonderful change durin' the last seven years. A change in our whole neighborhood. I think most of the credit is due to lime and phosphate, I always say they're like ham and eggs; both are good but both are better together. (LAUGHTER)

VOICE

That's right, Jim, durned if it aint.

JIM

IT goes right on through your whole farm...a balanced diet for your stock. Why my wife used to wear herself out feeding corn meal to chickens and yet they starved to death. Poor land raises poor corn. Land that don't have the nutrition that lime and phosphate give, just won't produce sound stock. Now, you boys saw yourselves I got top prices for calves topped off on grass and legumes. Why my pasture brings me more money than any cultivated crop I put in. And by shots, it was lime and phosphate that made all the difference.

ORGAN: Sneak in appropriate music...

JIM (continuing)

That was a lucky day -- that day I changed my mind, and decided to stay in Coon Range. I began to think in a new way about the same land. I learned I could make it different. I changed the soil.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

And that's the true story of Jim Hester of Logan County, Kentucky brought to you by the Nation's Station and the Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service. And now, speaking for the Soil Conservation Service, is Hal Jenkins.

JENKINS

Thanks, _____ . Jim Hester told us to be sure to say that he learned how to get forty bushel corn from fifteen bushel land because he listened to the tip his county agent gave him, and because of the help he received through the Triple-A in supplying soil building material. Jim Hester has kept records for ten years and I wish you could see the increase in all his yields over that period from his use of lime and phosphate. He likes rye grass too, he says. And another thing he said was that he got more money out of a small amount of stock well fed than from a large amount of stock half fed. He swears by a balanced ration....AD LIBS TO FILL NECESSARY TIME.....

And now, _____ , let's have Walter Lowdermilk's Eleventh Commandment.

ORGAN: Sneak in Deep River Theme...

ANNOUNCER

"Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

